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Alison Glazier
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Glazier

Short inspection of The Compass

Following my visit to the school on 1 May 2019 with Julie Nash, Ofsted Inspector, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in July 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

The previous inspection report described your leadership as 'inspirational'. This inspirational leadership continues. You are unrelenting in your pursuit of excellence and desire to provide pupils in the school with the best quality of care and education possible. The school is forward-looking and is continuously seeking ways to improve. Your vision for the school is clear and, together with your deputy headteacher and staff, you are working fastidiously to bring this vision to life. When you talk about the school, particularly the pupils, your passion and determination to improve the life chances of these vulnerable pupils shines through. This attitude is replicated by staff who work at the school.

The Compass is a welcoming and caring school community. Inspectors were struck by how everything that staff do is focused upon meeting the needs of pupils. Relationships within the school are impressive. Staff know each and every pupil extremely well. For example, the warm welcome each pupil receives from staff at the start of the day helps reduce their anxiety and allows for a calm and purposeful start to their learning. As a result, pupils continue to make strong progress in the subjects they study.

Parents are tremendously positive and greatly appreciate the high-quality care and education their child receives. 'The school has gone above and beyond', and 'I

couldn't be more grateful' are two of the many positive comments heard by inspectors. Pupils are also appreciative of all that the staff do as the following comments exemplify: 'Thank you for believing in me' and 'You will never understand how thankful I am to you.'

At the previous inspection, you were asked to improve pupils' attendance. While you have made improvements, you are aware that, due to the changing needs of pupils, more work needs to be done to ensure that pupils attend school every day.

At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed on the key lines of enquiry to be considered during the day. These included: how the school ensures that pupils are safe, behave well and attend regularly; the effectiveness of leaders in ensuring that pupils receive a high standard of education; how teaching supports good learning, especially in mathematics; and the effectiveness of the curriculum in supporting pupils' academic, social and emotional development. These key lines of enquiry are considered below under 'Safeguarding' and 'Inspection findings'.

Safeguarding is effective.

The nature of your school means that all your pupils are vulnerable in a variety of ways. Therefore, you, your staff and governors consider the safeguarding of pupils as the most important aspect of your work. There is a strong culture of safety and security which permeates the school. There is a shared understanding of the need to protect each pupil from all possible risks. Your mantra to staff is to 'think the unthinkable'. Staff receive high-quality safeguarding training and regular updates on keeping pupils safe. This training enables staff to identify potential risk to pupils and take decisive action with confidence. Daily morning and afternoon briefings provide staff with the opportunity to share potential concerns and act rapidly where needed.

The designated safeguarding leads (DSLs) are vigilant in their oversight of any child protection issues. Inspection activity found overwhelming evidence that there is no hesitation by the DSLs to escalate concerns and persist with contacting external agencies in their pursuit to keep pupils safe.

You and your governors are aware of the importance of safer recruitment. Together, you ensure that robust checks are undertaken prior to staff starting employment in the school.

The leadership team ensures that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of high quality. Policies and procedures take account of the latest statutory guidance and are strictly adhered to by staff.

As a result of the diligence of you and your staff, parents are confident that their child is safe and happy at school. Typical comments made by parents include, 'My son has found a sense of hope that he had lost', 'My son is thriving here' and 'The school has changed everything for the better'. Pupils spoken with by inspectors all confirm that they feel safe and are well looked after.

Inspection findings

- Leaders have taken decisive action to improve the attendance of pupils. Pastoral support leaders are proactive. For example, they work closely with parents through home visits. They provide parents with guidance and support in encouraging their child to attend school regularly. Leaders monitor closely the daily attendance of pupils and call home when they do not arrive in school. However, leaders acknowledge there remains work to be done as, despite the work of school leaders, overall attendance remains stubbornly below the national average.
- Behaviour of pupils is typically good. Policies and procedures are consistently adhered to by staff. Pupils have a clear understanding of behaviours which are not tolerated, such as physical aggression and verbal abuse. The restraint of pupils is used as a last resort. Evidence viewed by inspectors confirms that there has been a decrease in the incidence of restraint and records are detailed and of high quality.
- Leaders, including governors, are very clear about the school's successes but also about the areas that still need improvement. There is a clear commitment to honest reflection and self-evaluation. As a result, the school continues to be successful. You have no doubt as to what needs to improve. For example, you recognise that while your development plans accurately reflect your self-evaluation, there is no distinction between who is responsible for leading actions and who is responsible for evaluating their impact. This reduces levels of accountability.
- Leaders have a wealth of information about all aspects of the work of the school. For example, there are detailed records of attendance, behaviour and achievement. However, leaders do not analyse this information well enough to provide them with more insightful information and determine if their actions are having the best impact.
- There is clear evidence that teachers receive support and challenge through leaders' monitoring of teaching and learning. You take decisive action if teaching does not meet your high standards. Consequently, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment remains strong.
- Mathematics has significantly improved. Under the leadership of the new subject leader, the improvements identified at the time of the last inspection have been successfully introduced. Planned activities meet the needs of pupils well. Teachers' questioning carefully probes and checks pupils' understanding. As a result, the achievement of pupils in this subject has improved across the school.
- Pupils have access to a wide range of subjects, both academic and vocational. Leaders have the aspiration that, where appropriate, all pupils will return to a mainstream school. Therefore, teachers work hard to ensure that pupils do not fall behind in their studies and support them in continuing to study the subjects they had started in mainstream schools. As a result, pupils enjoy success in GCSE subjects including mathematics, English, geography, art and photography.
- Alongside academic and vocational studies, pupils have access to a range of therapeutic provision including drama, horse and art therapy. This supports

pupils in tackling their challenging behaviours and reduces their anxiety. Such provision, coupled with their education, is having a positive impact on their future destinations. All pupils at the end of key stage 4 are successful in gaining places in further education, training or employment.

- With large fluctuations in the school's roll, leaders recognise the need to keep the school's curriculum design under constant review. You continue to work hard in tailoring your programmes of study to enable all pupils to achieve well, regardless of the amount of time they spend in the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue the drive to further improve pupils' attendance
- they make better use of the wealth of pupil information gathered and analyse more carefully what is, or is not, working well and why
- they continue to review the school's curriculum so that planned learning meets the needs of all pupils while they attend the school and leads to strong outcomes
- there is a clear distinction between who implements the agreed school improvement priorities and who monitors and evaluates the impact of these actions.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Dorset. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jen Southall
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors held discussions with you, members of the senior leadership team, subject leaders and a range of other staff. We spoke both formally and informally with pupils throughout the school day. We met with members of the governing body. Telephone conversations were held with an education officer from Dorset local authority and your school improvement partner.

Inspectors visited lessons with leaders to observe pupils' attitudes to learning and to view their work. A wide range of documentation was looked at, including the school's evaluation of its own performance, development planning and information relating to pupils' current achievement and progress. Inspectors also checked the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding arrangements.

There were no responses to the online questionnaire for parents, Parent View.

However, inspectors considered the school's own recent survey of parents and carers. They also held telephone conversations with two parents and spoke to two parents during the day. Inspectors reviewed the 12 responses received through the staff questionnaire.